Introduction

How can we enter in the twenty-first century when half of the worldôs population comprising of women is deprived of basic human rights and is subjected to inhuman and cruel acts of violence? The status of women varies enormously from one part of the world to another. However, nowhere do women enjoy equal status with men[1].

Women are beautiful creations of God. As human beings and citizens of this country, they have human and legal rights to live with human dignity.[2]

Inequality of women is a global phenomenon. It is not confined to one country. The methods of treatment may differ from country to country - but certainly there is inequality between men and women[3]. Gender equality is an issue of primary importance to the welfare and progress of all nations. It is fundamental to achieving people-centered development. What humanity needs is a world that is free, fair and equal; a world that will have no discrimination, violence, or exploitation, a world where opportunity and prosperity are shared by all. So why is violence against women and discrimination so widespread all over the world? It is because discrimination begins in the minds of people, where gender-bias becomes a habit in thought and action.[4]

Empowerment means to make one powerful or equip one with the power to face the challenges of life to overcome the disabilities, handicaps and inequalities. Empowerment is and active, multidimensional process which should enable to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It would consist in providing greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision-making, greater ability to plan their lives, greater control over the

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[1] S.L.Goel, ***Good Governance: An Integral Approach***,(New Delhi: Deep& Deep Publication,2007) p.490.

[2]Gracious Thomas, Director, SOCE, ***Rural Development (MRDE-101)***: Rural Social Development, Block-05(New Delhi :IGNOU,2009)p.28.

[3]Areti Krishna Kumari, ***Status of Women***. (Art.) Abstract, ICFAI, University, Hyderabad, February 2007.

[4]S.L.Goel, *Op. cit. p.490*.

circumstances that influence their lives and freedom from the shackles imposed on them by customs, beliefs and practices.[5]

The term empowerment means giving power to certain under privileged and oppressed sections of society. Empowerment literally means making some one powerful, facilitating the weak to attain strength to increase oneôs self-esteem, to help someone to be assertive and self-confident, to enable someone to confront injustice and oppression and to support someone to fight for her/his rights.

Concept of Women Empowerment

The concept of empowerment of women is of recent origin. The word empowerment has been given currency by UN agency during recent years. It is being increasingly felt that empowerment of women will enable a greater degree of self-confidence, a sense of independence and capability to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society[6].

The concept of womenôs empowerment in the modern context can be traced to the latter half of the 1970s when it was increasingly discussed and promoted by the third world feminists and womenôs organizations. The UN Womenôs decade (1976-85) influenced perception all over the world and consequently most governments were to shift emphasis on womenôs development programmes. The UN World Conferences on women have played instrumental role in transforming the paradigm of advancement of women.[7]

The concept of political empowerment of women assumes special significance. Empowerment is envisaged as an aid to help women achieve equality with men, or at least reduce the gender based discriminations considerably. Empowerment would enable women to perform certain social roles that they cannot perform without it. Political status of women implies a degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of power and

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[5] Ambaroa Uplaonkar, ***Empowerment of Women***, *Main Stream*, Vol. -XLIII, No. 12 March, 2005.
[6] Ambaroa Uplaonkar, *Ibid.*
[7] Amal Mandal, ***Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions*** (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2003), p.22.

importance given by the society to the role of women. The equality is inseparable from active political participation. Participation of women in political life is integral to the advancement of women. Their political participation means not only using the right to vote, but also power-sharing, co-decision-making and co-policy making at all levels of governance of the state. Womenôs equal status in every sphere is inextricably linked to countryôs progress and development.[8]

Women, who number 498.7 million according to 2001 census, represent 48.2 per cent of countryôs population of 1,027.01 million. The development of women has always been the central focus in developmental planning, since Independence. Though there have been various shifts in policy approaches in the last 50 years from the concept of welfare in the 70s, to development in the 80s, and now the empowerment in the 90s, the development of women and child, since its inception has been implementing special programmes for holistic development and empowerment of women with welfare programmes, particularly in the sectors of health, education, rural and urban development, etc[9].

Components of Women Empowerment

In the words of Dr. P Venugopal some components of women empowerment are:

1. Awareness building about:

- Situation of women
- Discrimination against women
- Rights of women
- Opportunities to women
- Importance of gender equality
- Organizing a group collectively
- Group identity and group pressure

[8]J.P. Singh, **Indian Democracy and Empowerment of Women.** *The Indian Journal of Public Administration.* Vol.XLVI January-March, 2000, pp.618-19.

[9] S.L. Goel and Shalini Rajneesh, ***Panchayati Raj in India*** (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 2003) p.267.

2. Capacity building and skill development by:

- Ability to plan, to decide and to organize
- Ability to manage and to carry out activities.
- Ability deal with peoples/institutions in the world around
- Participation-in decision making at home, in the community and the society.
- Access and control over-resources, means of productivity and distribution process.[10]

Hurdles in Empowerment of women:

1. Low education in women.
2. Poor skills of women.
3. Poor information base of women.
4. Poor exposure of women.

Status of Women in India

During the centuries of its existence, the image of women according to Hinduism has undergone many changes and their status has been shifting from period to period and from epic to epic.

Vedic Period

Women in Vedic period enjoyed a very high and honorable rank in society and they were provided with equality with their male counterparts[11]. During the Vedic period female education was very much prized Upanayana, the Vedic initiation was common for girls. They studied the sacred texts, had full access to different branches of knowledge.[12]

Medieval Period

[10] Dr. P. Venugopal, *Empowerment of Women SWOT Analysis, M. Koteswara Pao (ed.), Empowerment of Women in India*, (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing house, 2005) p. 448.
[11] A.N. Panda, ***Situating Indian Women***(Ed.) (Delhi: Abhijeet Publications,2008) p.105.
[12] Vijaya B. Korishetty Female Education in India: A Historical Perspective (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 2003) p.54.

During the medieval period, the status of women deteriorated. The Indian womenôs position in the society further deteriorated during this period. The Muslim ruler in the subcontinent brought the purdah pratha in the Indian society. In spite of these conditions, some women excelled in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion. When the Bhakti movement started to rise, the status of women started to improve with new trends in social and religious life of the Indian women.

British Period

During the British period some acts were passed to provide some relief to the Indian women. For example, the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 and the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 aimed at putting an end to the inhuman practices of condemning a Hindu widow to lead a life of misery, and prohibiting the practice of getting innocent girls married at an early age or even during their pinfancy. Some women leaders themselves had taken a lead to fight for the rights of women[13].

After Independence

India attained Independence on August 15, 1947. The framers of Constitution were fully aware of the existence of inequalities and mal-treatment meted out to the women in the male dominated Indian orthodox society. It was evident that in order to eliminate inequalities and to enhance the status of women, it was necessary to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of women and to protect them from exploitation. With this view in mind, the makers of the Constitution made provisions in it which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, class or creed. They incorporated in the Constitution certain special provisions for protection of women and children. The Constitution of India guarantee fundamental rights to all its citizens. The Preamble of the Constitution resolves to ensure justice, social, economic and political, liberty of thoughts, expression, belief faith and worship, equality of

[13] A.N. Panda, Op. Cit. p.26

status and opportunity and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. A look at the Constitution of India gives an insight into the Constitutional provisions for women[14]. Some of these provisions which ensure equality to women are:

- **Article 14** ï The state shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of law within the territory of India. This article is the bedrock of the principle of equality guaranteed to all men and women[15].
- **Article 15(1) –** of the Constitution provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, cast sex or place of birth**. Article 15(3)** of the Constitution specially provides that the state is permitted to make special provisions for the benefits of women[16].
- **Article 16(1)** and **(2) -** prohibits discrimination in general and also discrimination on the ground of sex in employment and those employed under the State[17].
- **Article 21** ï In this article the Constitution guarantees right to life to all the citizens.
- **Article 39 –** The State shall direct its policy for security of the citizens, men and women: (a) equal right to an adequate means of livelihood, (b) equal pay for equal work, (c) preservation and promotion of health and strength of workers, men, women and children against abuse[18].
- **Article 40 –** The Constitution provides for the organization of village Panchayat to promote self- government in the country.

[14] Mamta Kaushal***, Women Development-Strategies, Challenges and Prospects,*** Public Administration in the New Millennium: Challenges and Prospectus (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2003) p.297.
[15] A.N. Panda, Op. Cit. p.32.
[16]Gracious Thomas, Director, SOCE, ***Rural Development*** (**MRDE-101**): Rural Social Development,Block-05(New Delhi :IGNOU,2009) p. 30.
[17] Ibid. p.30.
[18] A.N. Panda, Op. Cit. p.32.

- **Article 51A (e) - of** the Constitution provides that it will be the duty of every citizens of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women[19].

Since the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act the major change that took place in context of women functionaries of PRIs was political representation of women through reservation. About one million women entered in the first election of Panchayats after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. About 40 percent of the elected women represented the marginalized sections[20].

Women Empowerment in Himachal Pradesh[21]

Himachal Pradesh Government has taken a number of steps to empower women in every sphere of life. In order to check the decline in sex ratio a massive awareness campaign has been launched to highlight that protection of female child is vital to maintain the very fabric of society. State government is implementing scheme of cash incentives to improve sex ratio and protection of the female child. A scheme for awarding the Panchayats up to Rs. 5.00 lakh for recording favourable sex ratio at birth has been started. In order to change the negative attitude of community towards girl child and mother at the time of birth, **Beti Hai Anmol** scheme has been started w.e.f. 05.07.2010.

Apart from above, one of the major strategies for securing gender equality for decision making in allocation of public resources and budget distribution, all departments of the State Government have been asked to ensure that 30% of the funds are earmarked in women related sectors in such a manner that these benefits and empower the women.

On political front, women MLAs constitute **7.35%** in the present Vidhan Sabha which is higher than neighboring Punjab and many other states. To increase the

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[19] Gracious Thomas, Op. Cit. p.30.

[20] Nupur Tiwari, ***Women in Panchayati Raj***, *Indian Journal of Public Administration* VOL. LIV No. 1, January- March, 2008.

[21] **Draft Annual Plan, 2011-12**, Planning Department, Government of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla-2, p.88-89.

participation of women in decisionï making and developmental activities, the state government has raised the reservation for women in the PRIs and ULBs from 33% to minimum 50%.

Himachal Pradesh Government is committed for the empowerment of women. Government has announced holidays on Bhaiyaduj, Raksha Bandhan and Karwa Chowth for women employees; and all the women are given the facilities of free travelling in the H.R.T.C. buses on Bhaiyaduj and Raksha Bandhan[22].

Representation of Women in Himachal Pradesh in 2010 PRI's Election.

The 73rd amendment in the Constitution provides for allotment of one third seats to the women category. Articles 243 D(2) and 243 D(3) provides that not less than one third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women. Articles 243 D (4) provides that not less than one third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons of the Panchayat at each level shall be reserved for women[23].

The fourth general election held in the month of December, 2010 and January, 2011, 11317 (i.e. 58.30 %) women member have been elected out of total 19413 members. 1639 women Pradhans (i.e. 50.54 %) out of 3243 Pradhans in the State have been elected as against 50 % reservation provided under the Constitution. 42 women are elected as Chairpersons in 77 Panchayat Samities i.e. women are representing 54.55 % of the total Panchayat Samities. Keeping the lead taken by women in Panchayat Samiti elections the 6 women have occupied the office of Chairpersons out of total 12 Zilla Parishads in the State i.e. women have got 50 % representation as Chairperson in Zilla Parishads[24].

[22] *Directorate, Information and Public Relation Department*, Government of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla.
[23] State Election Commission - (Himachal Pradesh)- Election Report-2005,p103.
[24] Annual Administration Report-2010-11, Panchayati Raj Department, Himachal Pradesh,pp.7-8.

Profile of study Area

Himachal Pradesh, called *'Dev Bhumi'* (The abode to gods) by the ancients and known by various names such as land of gods and goddesses, state of orchards, natureós paradise, is situated in the North West Himalayas, lies between latitude 30°22ô40ò to 33°12ô40ò North, and longitude 75°47ô55ò to 79°04ô20ò East.[25] It is almost wholly mountainous with altitudes ranging from 350 meters to 6,975 meters above the mean sea level. The geographical area of the state is 55,673 sq. kms. This is 1.69 percent of the countryôs area and 10.54 per cent of the Himalayan landmass. At present the population of the State is 68,56, 509 with a density of 123 persons / sq. km. Women percentage of the State is 49.33[26]. It is surrounded by Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Punjab and Haryana in the south-west and Uttaranchal in the south-east. In the North-East the state forms the international boundary with the Tibetan part of China.[27]

Himachal Pradesh came into existence as a state of the Indian Union on 15th April, 1948 as a result of the merger of 30 Punjab and Shimla hill Estates with an area of 28,168 sq. kms. The Pradesh continued as a Union Territory till January 25, 1971, when it was granted full statehood. The present boundaries of the Pradesh came into shape in November, 1966. This increased the area of the state to 55,673 sq. kms.. Reorganization of the districts was done in September, 1972[28]. At present, as per the jurisdiction frame, the State has 12 districts, 71 tehsils, 77 blocks, 3243 Panchyats and 19388 villages.

Society of Himachal Pradesh

The society of HP is a unique blend of tribal and non tribal, civilized and semi civilized[29], or in short that of hills and plains life. The people of HP are broadly divided in to four traditional castes, Brahmin, Kashriya, Vaishya and

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[25] Sudhir Mahajan, ***Himachal Tourist Paradise*** (Shimla : Strawberry Publiction,2000)p.125.
[26] Census of India, 2011.
[27] M.S. Ahluwalia, ***History of Himachal Pradesh*** (New Delhi: Intellectual Publication, 1998) p.2.
[28]State of Environment Report-Himachal Pradesh, State Council for Science Technology and Environment,Shimla,2002, Vol.I p.14.
[29] Jag Mohan Balokhra, ***The Wonderland of Himachal Pradesh*** (New Delhi: H.G. Publications, 2007) p.753.

Shudra, with sub castes. The people of higher castes do not adhere to the codes of unsociability as rigid as those of south. They do keep distinctions by way of restrictions or interlining, inter marriage and in terms of locality, etc. The social setup of the upper parts of the lower Himalayas, the great Himalayas the Zaskar, the Pangi and the Dhauladhar regions do not have any similarity with that of the plains and is much different from those living in the Shiwaliks. Most of the people living in these areas from tribal population of Himachal live a simple life.

Solan District

Solan district came into existence on 1st September 1972 by reorganization and merging of ancient Shimla and Mahasu districts[30]. Solan is considered the gateway of the state. It lies between latitude 30°50ô and 31°15ô N and longitude 76°42ô and 77°20ô E[31]. The district is surrounded by the boundaries of Shimla district in the north and the boundaries of Punjab and Haryana states in the south.

The other districts of Himachal Pradesh which border the Solan district are Sirmaur in the east, Bilaspur in the west and Shimla in the north. The district Solan comprises of plains and uplands with altitudes ranging from 300 metres to 3000 metres above the mean sea level. The geographical area of the Solan district is 1936 sq.kms. which is 3.5 percent of the stateôs area.

Solan district has its recognition at international level due to its world famous tourist place at Kasauli, highest cricket ground on the hill top at Chail; and Dr Y S Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry at Nauni which is first in its own kind in Asia and second in the World. Right from the beginning, the district Solan took stride in the implementation of developmental schemes besides creating infrastructure for new establishments. Presently, district is comprised of 4 sub-divisions, 5 tehsils, 2 sub-tehsils, 5 development blocks and 211panchayats.

The Deputy Commissioner being the administrative head of the district controls and guides the line agencies in revenue, development and other

[30] The Indian Express, Chandigarh , 29 June,1999, p14.

[31] Jag Mohan Balokhara, Op.cit, p.539.

administrative works in the district. He also acts as a link between Government and the public.

Mandi District

Mandi as a state was founded by Ajmer Sen 191th descendant of Raja Babu Sen, 1527-AD. With merger of Mandi and Suket two princely states, Mandi was declared as the fourth district of Himachal on 15th April, 1948[32]. Total area of Mandi district is 3950 sq. kilometer. The population of district is 9, 99518 with rural population is 9, 36894 according to 2011 census.

It is the states significant business center. From NH-21 Chandigarh-Manali highway and NH-20 Pathankot-Mandi highway, this is an important passage to Kullu-Manali and other neighboring places. One of the up-coming and budding towns of the district is the town of Sundarnagar. The population of Mandi consists of an educated layer of middle class people. Mandyali language, which is one of Himachal Pradeshs Pahari languages, is spoken by the people of Mandi. Mandi was declared to be the most inhabited district of Himachal Pradesh, after Kangra, in the year 2011.

The district of Mandi was separated into 10 distinct blocks in order to take actions regarding the improvement and progress of the entire region. A total area of 3,950 sq. kilometer is covered by the district and out of the total area of the state; Mandi occupies 7.10% of it. Mandi Sundernagar, Jogindernagar, Rewalsar, Sarkaghat and Pandoh are the six census city of the district. The Zonal Headquarter of the Central Zone turned out to be Mandi in recent times. The Districts of Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Kullu and Mandi itself comes under the Central Zone[33].

[32]Sudhir Mahajan,Op.Cit.p.90.

[33] www.onefivenine.com/India/vilage/Mandi

Review of Literature

The review of literature is essential for the development of problem and to take the derivation of effective approach to the solution. It is an exacting task for a deep insight of and clear perspective of the field. It is a crucial step which invariably minimizes the risk of dead ends, rejected topics wasted effort trail and errors, actively oriented approach already discarded by previous investigator, the review of literature promotes a clear and greater understanding of the problems and its crucial aspects and also ensure the avoidance of unnecessary duplication, there have been some studies on the women empowerment in special reference to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Since the PRI movement began, a number of studies have been made through published material and un-published material on PRIs and women empowerment. A brief review of selected literature has been chosen to help in understanding the concepts and problems of the study. Here we will deal with:

a) Review of literature on PRI at all India level.
b) Review of literature on PRI at State level.
c) Review of literature on women empowerment and participation and vis-à-vis PRIôs.
d) Review of Status of women in India.

Kaur, (**1978**)[34] in the study **Status of Hindu Women in India** found that a new concept of womanhood is gradually emerging in India which is at odds with the traditional concept of Hindu women as devout wife confined to the home. The study indicated that participation of women in politics can be seen in Parliament, in the state legislative Assemblies and in other policy and decision making bodies. Due to higher education, self-awareness and national consciousness, they are now claiming equal status with men inside and outside the family. They are passing through a transitional stage, nor wholly traditional nor fully modern. The cultural heritage and traditional values can, however, not wholly vanish from the attitude

[34] Inderjeet Kaur, ***Status of Hindu Women in India***, (Allahabad: Chugu Publication, 1978).

and behavior of Hindu Women. The result of study indicated a positive change in behavior and outlook of middle class Hindu Women.

Giri (1995)[35] in his book, ***Women and Politics***, examined that the historical 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments empowering women to participate in grass root democracy have not only strengthened out democratic institution but also reduced disparity. These land mark amendments have at once posed before out women, both opportunities and challenges. Author prescribed that democracy means poser of people and people without half of its women populating is meaningless. For the success of democracy women participation in politics is must. She claimed that the participation of women could bring significant positive change in functioning of institutionalized machinery for implementation of programmes for the welfare and development of women and children. She further describes that none of the political parties have given enough representation to women candidates to contest elections and this is the main reason for slow development of women and their under representation in political decision making. According to the author social orthodoxy, customs, tradition etc. prevent women from entering Political activities. Although in recent time changes are taking place, the pace is rather slow, let us hope that 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment would hasten matter.

Jharta (1996)[36] in her book ***Women and Politics*** analyses and evaluated the role and impact of family and education of womenôs participation in politics. Her study is confined to womenôs segment of the political realm of the state of Himachal Pradesh. In her study, family and education had been taken as two major determinants of the political participation of women. She had chosen these two variables mainly because they are significantly related to political participation of women and were considered both booster as well as hindrance in their participation in politics. The book sought to explore how and to what extent these variable affects the nature and scope of womenôs participation in politics

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[35] V. Mohini Giri, ***Women and Politics*** (Yashodha Bhatt and L.N. Mangola, eds). (Delhi: B.R. Publication Corporation, 1995).

[36] Bhawna Jharta, ***Women and Politics in India*** (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publication, 1996).

and has determined the variation in their participatory level. The authorôs has suggested that there is a dire need to replace the traditional value system, which is based upon inequality of sexes and in which women play a subordinate role. In the aforesaid study she has pointed out that womenôs participation does not mean only the mobilization of powers to solve their problem, it is also necessary to apply womenôs point of view in policy making which affect the whole society. Womenôs presence in the policy making bodies will at least make a mark in male dominated patriarchal politico-cultural structure. The issue of women participation in politics cannot be viewed in isolation from the general position of women in society. The author stresses that the socio-cultural practices in the society contribute to a large extent for overall development of this segment.

Mahi Pal (1998) [37] stated ***Empowerment at Grass Roots*** that after 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, empowerment of Panchayats was assumed as a magic wand which would cure all ills affecting rural economy and society. Favoring in fact doors panchayati raj system stated, it provides government at the doors of the people. Villagerôs problems such as securing ration card, recommendation of block and bank officials in getting loans, etc., are more or less solved at block level or at the district panchayat level.

Saxena (1999)[38] in his book ***Women's Political Participation in India*** today women are aggressively being recruited in politics not merely to right past inequities or realize their equal citizenship but to bring a different, explicitly female perspective to the political arena and to appeal to the womenôs vote. It is believed that adequate representation of all groups would strengthen the consolidation of democracies that are open and responsive, thereby making them more durable. Though there are no shortcuts to ensure womenôs empowerment in the complex social structure in India, with its gender and cast-based hierarchies, training in the correct prospective and reaping full benefits of reservation would facilitate emergence of a strong leadership among women. In India, women have

[37] Mahipal, ***Women in Panchayats: Experience of a Training Camp***, Economic and Political Weekly, Jan. 1998.

[38] K.S. Saxena, ***Women's Political Participation in India***, (Jaipur: Sublime Publication, 1999).

been having a number of important positions right from the first woman Prime Minister. But even today, atrocities against women are committed every day in this male-dominated society.

Goel (2001)[39] Discuss in his book **Good Governance: An Integral Approach** the concept of good Governance in this wider perspective. In the first part of his book, which is an introductory nature, he analytically examines the meaning and scope of good governance. He takes up the issues of people participation and women empowerment in part II and part III. Issues that arise in the field of women empowerment as women constitute 50 percent of our population and the realization is slowly dawning as to how they have to be treated on a footing of equality and their contribution recognized.

Sharma (2001)[40] opined in her book ***Women Development and Empowerment*** about different aspects of women empowerment has to be ensured and maintained because in India their political empowerment has yet to be achieved as they have got social and economic empowerment. In this book she also describes the status of women in India in different times.

Mandal (2003)[41], assesses social and political background of Women Members in one District of West Bengal and evaluates various facets of their participation and role performance in PRIs, ascertains the nature, their social acceptability and informs both the positive and negative aspects of reservation policy for women. The study being forth few exclusive and absorbing features: women members are not dummy or docile; their participation both at formal Panchayat process and informal levels is no less exalting.

Goel and Rajneesh (2003)[42] in his book Panchayati ***Raj in India: Theory and Practice***, attempted an examination of current issues in 16 chapters concerning

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[39] S.L. Goel, ***Good Governance: An Integral Approach***, (New Delhi: Deep &Deep Publication, 2001).

[40] Pragya Sharma, ***Women Development and Empowerment***, (Jaipur: Avishkar Publishers, 2001).

[41] Amal Mandal, ***Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions,*** (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2003).

[42] S.L. Goel and Shalini Rajneesh, ***Panchayati Raj in India:Theory and Practice***, (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publication, 2003).

about all aspect of Panchayati Raj Institutions and suggested ways and means to develop Panchayati Raj Institutions in right earnest method. The authors observed that womenôs entry in the functioning of Panchayati Raj at all level, particularly at decision making levels, will usher an era of equality and prosperity to the villages and empowerment of women leading to rural development on moral values.

Hust (2004)[43] studied two blocks, Balipatna in Khudra District and Gania block in Nayagarh district of Orissa. She studied ***Women's Political Representation and Empowerment in India: A Million of Indira's Now*?** Scrutinizes the processes that have been set in motion through the demand for 33 percent reservation for women in local government in India. The authorôs developed an analytical frame work based on recent theoretical literature on quotas in politics and the concept of empowerment. The Empirical data was collected in Orissa through a survey. Among the major issue discussed in this book is the socio-economic composition of the new PRIôs. The authorôs further assesses how far women have become empowered individually in terms of having gained confidence and how for the quota empowers women as group.

The authorôs find in her study that women representatives are a little bit younger than the male representative (mean age (37.7 to V.41.3 years). It was also found that the elected women are drawn from lower income groups and lower casts than their male colleagues. According to her the component of women in India has definitely received an important impetus through the quota in local politics. But it will be a long lasting process. They need to be aided by male citizens, officials and representatives and one must ensure that men are co-opted for this cause.

Altekar (2005)[44] in his book ***The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*** provides comprehensive study on Hindu Women during the last four thousand

[43] Elvin Hust, ***Women Political Representation and Empowerment in India***, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2004).
[44] A.S. Altekar, ***The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization***, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarashidas, 2005).

years and also indicates the general lines on which the present day problems confronting should be solved. This is well rounded text, targeted towards the relationship between Hindu women and society. Authorôs explains the position of women is superbly organized according to the principal divisions of a womenôs life taking one through discussions of issue such as óChild hood and Education of Women,ô ôThe Position of the Widow, óDress and Ornaments, Marriageô. The place of women in public life and religion. The general attitude of society towards women, both normal and abnormal times and situation. An attempt has been made in this book to describe the position of women in Hindu civilization from prehistoric times to the present day. Authorôs deals with the history and development of its topics from earliest times to the present then suggests at the conclusion the lines on which the present day problems connected with it should be solved. This book is mainly a research work, which documents every important statement it makes and seeks to throw fresh light on many important and obscure points connected with the topics of enquiry.

Singh (2005)[45] in his book ñ***Women and Panchayati Raj***ò is collection of Papers on Women study in Panchayati Raj written by different scholars. In this book authors emphasize that participation of women in the socio-economic and political institutions in a real and full sense is absolutely essential for a society to progress. The awakening of women in India towards a society where justice and brotherhood prevail can best be achieved by women to women contact. In this book, an attempt has been made to unveil the relationship between the political mobilization of rural women and its impact on social justice with particular reference to their participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. It has been sought to assess the role of socio-economic background of rural women to the extent of their political mobilization. An attempt has been made to suggest measures for more participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Empowerment of women is the system of acquiring and surviving powers and authority. Possession of powers presents a sense of strength among women

[45] J.L.Singh, ***Women and Panchayati Raj***, (Delhi: Sunrise Publications, 2005).

representatives. This has worked in three major areas of empowerment i.e. Economic, political and social. Structure of society must understand one thing that we can't keep women leadership in vacuum.

Kumari (2006) [46] explains her view in her book ***Dynamics of Women Empowerment*** compiled fourteen chapters and portrays diverse issues pertaining to women empowerment. In her study on *Women, literacy and Empowerment as Analysis of a District Experience in Andhra Pradesh*, author describes about empowering rural women through floriculture in fifth chapter of this book. Keeping in view the increasing demand and better returns from flowers than agriculture crops, Haryana State Government has started taking steps to popularize commercial cultivation of flowers in 1993 to earn foreign currency. Since women make great contribution in flower cultivation, they can empower themselves in economic terms. Women empowerment is possible only when women become economically self-dependent and they participate actively in different decision-making processes at home or outside. She also describes the determinants of women's empowerment in this book.

Roy (2008)[47] studied in his book, ***Panchayati Raj and Rural Devbelopment*** found that panchayats have changed the face of the state of West Bengal. These have been all round development of the rural population. The villages have got an institution of their own which transformed their standard of living to the higher level. The three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions are directed to alleviation of poverty and rural development. This study attempts to discuss the progress, prospectus and problems of the panchayats and rural development in West Bengal.

Dr. Singh, (2008)[48] in a study conducted on Rural Women in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, reveals that full development may not be achieved unless women and the

[46] Sumitra Kumari, ***Dynamics of Women Empowerment***, (New Delhi: Alfa Publication, 2006).
[47] Bhaktapada S. Roy, ***Panchayati Raj and Rural Development***, (Delhi: Abhijeet Publication, 2008).
[48] Dr. Anupama Singh, ***Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development***, (New Delhi :Kanishka Publishers,2008).

resources they represent are fully integrated into the development and women empowerment as a tool to sustain the development as an ongoing process. Dr. Singh also highlights the problems of the concept of Pati Panchayats or proxy rules by husbands.

Trivedi (2009) [49] in her study ***Women and Rural Development*** advocated behavioral change is must for self empowerment. This study examines the employees of a successful rural NGO in India that has received accolades for their work in empowerment to establish if the employee actuallyô walk the talkô. She selected one of the NGO (CRTC) Chinmaya Rural Training Centre located at Sidhbari in Himachal Pradesh. She also studied development of Tribal womenôs in India and their custom. She observed in her study that the impact of Panchayats in the lives of women has been quite significant because it affected womenôs lives socially, politically and economically since they got enough space to negotiate at private and public space. The presence of a large number of women in panchayats has led to social mobilization and created condition for social capital.

Dr. Nelasco (2010)[50] in her book ***Status of Women in India***, special attention has been given to the status of women since ancient time to the present scenario. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past. From a largely poorer status of women in ancient times, to the promotion of women rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. Women in India started realizing that they are equal players in the family and nation building. But still, the gender equality in all fields of life is continuing to be a debatable issue.

This book is an effort to explain the status of different categories of Indian women. The chapter on Domestic Violence Act may help the readers, especially the effected women, to protect themselves legally from the extreme form of chauvinistic male domination and harassment.

[49] Dr. Tanuja Trivedi, ***Women and Rural development***,(New Delhi: Jnanada Prakashan,2009).
[50] Dr. Shobna Nelasco, ***Status of Women in India***, (New Delhi: Deep &Deep Publication, 2010).

Rationale behind the Study

Women which constitute almost 50 percent of the total population are still found less empowered. Although equal opportunities have been given to them in all sectors but despite of the fact that they have been ignored, dominated and sexually harassed by the chauvinist society. In spite of all such odd situations, women are giving stiff competition to the males in every sector but such women are very few in number. The government of India is planning to grant them 33 per cent reservation and the matter is very hot and pending for approval in Parliament. After passing this act, 33 percent reservation will be available for women in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas respectively. Although women are contesting elections but their number and winning percentage is very low from 33 per cent. The intellectuals, political thinkers and policy makers are seriously thinking and planning that the women could be empowered, if they are given adequate share in the political sphere and they should be encouraged to take active participation in decision making at the grass root level. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that freedom should start from the grass root. Keeping in view these considerations in mind, the amendment in the Panchayati Raj Act was made through the 73rd Constitution Amendments to ensure participation of women in political activities with and objective to make them more empowered. Therefore, in the present study, an attempt will be made to evaluate the effect of reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions for empowering the women. The study has been chosen because women constitute one half of the segment of population in India. We cannot afford to keep them out of the mainstream.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Womenôs empowerment is one of the major objectives of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. It provides reservation of one-third of total number of posts of members and chairpersons at all three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Bringing women into the mainstream of the development is a major concern for the Government of India, which is why 2001 was declared as the ñYear of Women Empowermentò. The present study has been initiated with a view to

examine the issues related to empowerment the women in PRIôs in Himachal Pradesh. The present study shall be carried out in selected blocks of 2 districts in the state.

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To study the concept of women empowerment in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
2. To study the Position of Women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
3. To study socio-economic profile of Women.
4. To study the Constitutional and other Legislative measures/ provisions relating to the empowerment of women in India.
5. To study the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act 1992 and its impact on women empowerment especially on rural women in H.P.
6. To find out the various hurdles in the ways of active political participation decision making process of women in Himachal Pradesh.
7. To give suggestions for making women empowerment a reality.

FORUMULATION OF HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses framed for the present study are:

1. The changing concept from women welfare to women empowerment has not helped much in the enhancement of status of women.
2. Half-hearted implementation of provisions of the Constitution and other Legislative measures are affecting the status of women in India.
3. Women Members have a low level of political awareness.
4. Women members have low level of literacy rate in rural areas.

Research Methodology

The study is primarily based on primary sources of information. For present study survey research method will be adopted. To achieve the various objectives of the present study, data is to be collected from primary as well as secondary sources.

Primary Sources:

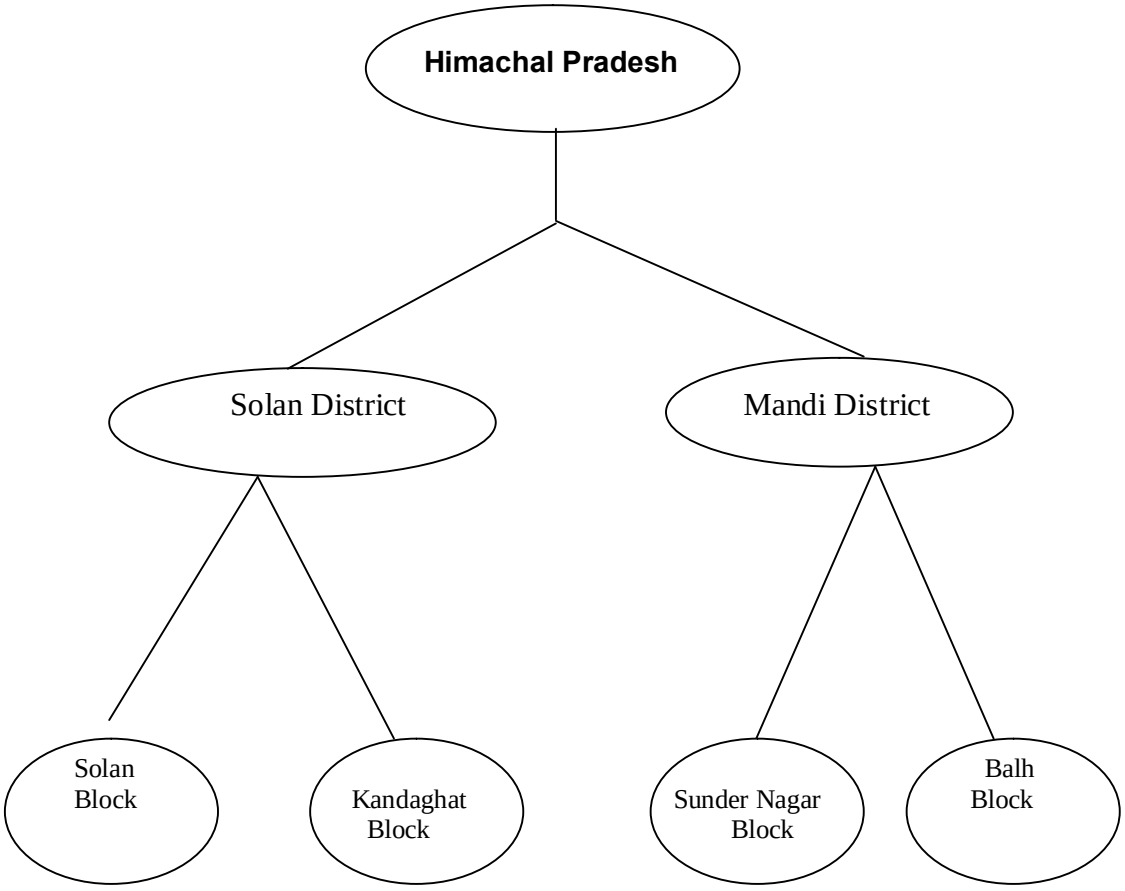
Primary data are original in character and are collected a fresh for some specific purpose. The primary data will be collected from 200 sample respondents of the selected blocks of Solan and Mandi districts. The **schedule** (questionnaire) consisting of various types of questions have been prepared to know the various aspect of empowerment i.e. social, economic and political and the level of awareness amongst the selected women. **Personal interviews** are an important and useful method of data collection. Informal interviews would be conducted with all the selected sample respondents. With the help of this method we observe the various social, economic, political and family problems of the women. Certain information will be collected through personal observation by the researcher. So **observation method** also will be used. In nutshell, personal rapport and observations were the main source of primary data.

SAMPLING

The focus of the study is Women Empowerment in PRIs with special reference to 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. Researcher selected Women Members and Pradhans elected in December, 2010 and January, 2011 PRIôs elections who had completed almost 2 years of their terms of five years for the present study. The universe of the study will comprise of different aspects of women empowerment. In Himachal Pradesh, there are 12 districts and out of 12 districts 2 districts Solan and Mandi was specifically selected as the sample district. Solan is the most important district of the State which contributes in both sectors- agriculture and industry. It is also known as the **Gateway of Himachal Pradesh**. There are 5 blocks in Solan District. 2 blocks Solan and Kandaghat are

selected for the study. Mandi is also very important district of the State. In Mandi district there are 10 blocks. 2 blocks Balh and Sunder Nagar are selected for the universe for collecting sample. Thus **50-50 members/Pradhans** will be selected from all four blocks. These 4 blocks are purposively selected because there is a great scope for research work in both rural and semi urban areas. The details of respondents will contacted and interviewed are given in Table-1 below:

Sampling Design



Distribution of Sample Women Respondents of Gram Panchayat of selected blocks are as under:

No. of Districts - 02 (Solan and Mandi)

No. of Development Blocks – 04

Table-1

Development Block	No. of Pancha -yats	Total Represe- ntative	Total no. of Women Respon- dents	Pradhans		Members		Total Sample taken
				Total	Sample taken	Total	Sample taken	
Solan	**35**	**238**	**137**	**18**	**10**	**119**	**40**	**50**
Kanda-ghat	24	156	90	12	10	78	**40**	**50**
Sunder nagar	**49**	**352**	**201**	**25**	**10**	**176**	**40**	**50**
Balh	51	378	215	26	10	189	40	50
Total blocks **4**					**40**		**160**	**200**

Source: Directorate of Panchayati Raj , Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.

Secondary Sources:

To make the study more relevant and authentic various sources will be consulted.

1.) Annual Administration Report.

2.) Reports from Ministry of Rural Development.

3.) Publications of Government of India and Himachal Pradesh.

4.) Journal and articles related to womenôs social, economic and political life.

5.) Books on PRIs and Women empowerment.

Tentative Chapterisation:

In the context of objectives stated above the study will be divided into following chapters.

Chapter I

Introduction, Scope and Methodology.

Chapter II

Policies, Programmes and Legislative Measures related to Women Empowerment.

Chapter III

Socio-economic and Political profile of Women in Himachal Pradesh.

Chapter IV

Role of Women in working of Panchayati Raj Institution: An analysis of Results.

Chapter V

Impact of 73rd Amendment Act on Women Empowerment: An analysis of Results.

Chapter VI

Conclusion and Suggestions.

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